upland, he notices and remembers the location of plants and roots, which supply him with much of his pharmacopeia. His sense of direction is trained and therefore seems uncanny to the layman. Moreover, not infrequently he actually transplants certain wild plants, so that he can always find them; sufficiently far from residential habitations so that they are not easily found or consumed by cattle or playful boys. A good rule for distance is how far the crowing of a rooster can be heard - for some plants are believed to lose their magical power if disturbed by this sound.

The "woggesha" usually learns his craft from his father, while serving him as apprentice. But at present the most popular "woggesha" in the town of Gondar is a well-known former bandit, who has gained an enviable reputation as a skilled surgeon. The "woggesha" is usually a diplomat in his human relations, much like the old-time Western family doctor. He usually tries to remain on good terms with the local church, and often invites the local dabtara to dinner at his house, especially on saints' days, to avoid their competitive hostility and to discuss some cases on a "professional" level.

In his capacity as surgeon, the "woggesha" sets fractures, cuts abscesses, pulls teeth (now with European pliers). But some of his practices are severely condemned by European doctors who object particularly to the woggesha's frequent ripping out of part of the soft palate to cure tonsilitis and chronic sore throat, often causing blood poisoning. Nevertheless, the present government still permits the woggesha to function "in his own district", for otherwise most people would be left without any medical empiricist.

582

757 The pulse is of no interest to the woggesha (unlike ancient medicine in Asia). He relies as heavily on violent purgatives as the ancient Egyptians, and on cauterization (much in the ancient Hippocratic tradition).

The enema, widespread in Asia, is not used. But the intestinal purgatives against tapeworm, especially the famous "kosso" (Quassia abyssinica), have been developed to complex sequences in medical cure. Butter is used as an ointment and mild laxative, sometimes boiled with specific herbs.

The instruments used by the "woggesha" are very simple: a sharp knife, simple forceps or pliers, wire for ripping (e.g. the soft palate), the horn of a cow or antelope or zebra (called "wäsänt") for cupping ("ärrärä"). The latter procedure is not used often, it is tried primarily to cure a chronic headache, by shaving an area on the rear of the skull, making a small incision, and drawing the blood by means of the horn. Artificial nosebleeds are also occasionally produced ("zämmärä"). But drawing blood is done in great secrecy, for the patient is ashamed to have it become known that his "blood is bad". Instead of applying leeches, some patients are taken to a waterhole or lowland lake known to contain leeches, where they expose the sick part of the body in the water, waiting for the leeches to fasten themselves.

752 Some "woggesha" have a great reputation for having saved patients bitten by snakes. The fact is that most Amhara, living on the highland plateau, rarely encounter a really poisonous snake, and suffer most often from the harmless (though painful) bite of the "talba" snake. The patient would recover anyway in due course.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5



000 The patient would recover anyway in due course.

758 The therapeutic value of convalescense ("zägäm ala") is recognized, and patients are told to bask in the sunshine.

562 Men are more likely to let themselves be treated by the "woggesha";
756 women, who suffer more frequently from functional ailments, approach
757 the "dabtara" or "zar" doctor more often and request magical aid.

844 When birth approaches, the midwife is called, almost never the woggesha. If he is, he may not touch the genital parts of the woman, and merely advises the midwife. When labor pains begin, the patient is given a drink of mashed linseed to "relax the birth tract" and to "lessen the pain". The newborn baby is annointed with butter (often rancid), and fed some of it.

759 Other medical helpers, apprentices, or modern "dressers" may be referred to as "healers" ("fawash"), "bäla mädanit" (lit. medicine man, who knows empirical drugs and cures), "caretaker" ("astabaqi"), male nurse ("nogait"), modern "dresser" ("astamami"). None of these are respected professions, for they are regarded as too close to manual labor, and such practitioners usually go to other provinces where their work will not shame the family. In recent years, the more skilled ones have been coming from Eritrea.

178
757 Modern change has been largely indirect and partial. The new laws still permit the "woggesha" to function. Penicillin and other antibiotics can be purchased without a prescription at the big "Saturday markets", for as little as ETh$2.50 (US$1.-), and the patient simply buys it, takes it to a "dresser" in the nearest town, whom he pays 1/2 dollar Ethiopian (US 20 cents), to give the injection. When symptoms disappear, e.g. in syphilis, he believes himself cured.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5



178 This attitude is of course deplored by the Western physicians who know
757 of it. But modern medical treatment is still little available outside the major towns. Patients come to hospitals often only as a last resort, fearing to be separated from kinfolk and exposed to treatment by strangers, so that mortality in hospitals is high, which reinforces
[743] the fears. At present there are probably no more than 50 hospitals in all Ethiopia, and only a few hundred Western physicians. Both are heavily concentrated in Addis Ababa, so that the field of the "woggesha" has not shrunk at all.

164 B. Common Ailments and their Treatment.

757 The more common ailments and procedures followed by the "woggesha"
756 and "dabtara", (practitioners who occasionally overlap in specialties
755 but almost never in treatment), include the following (see next page):

753 An important part of diagnosis is the decision whether an ailment is contagious ("fera") or not, and whether it is inherited, congenital ("quranna") or not. If inherited, marriages with such families are despised as not "attentam" (good stock), the same term used for descent from slaves or other "race" or both.

759 In general, the woggasha is most often called in organic ailments;
757 shares with the "dabtara" the practice of functional ailments; while the latter shares with the "zar" doctor the treatment of mental ailments.

2. Healing the Spirit

x 794 A. The "Zar" cult of supernatural spirits, its institution and cosmology.

755 One of the most complex developments of Amhara non-material culture, to which a great deal of mental ingenuity is devoted, is the healing of mental ailments. But this goes far beyond treatment and cure. The "zar" doctors do not limit themselves to treating some of the aforementioned mental ailments. They organise the afflicted, before, during and after "cure", into "zar" societies, which bear the earmarks of a religious cult, and to which the individual belongs henceforth until his or her (more often her) death. Here he finds the warm companionship of the fellow-afflicted; opportunity for expressive behavior; the religious feeling of having been of service; the personal attentio- - a personal possessive and protective spirit; and the visible leadership of the "zar" doctor who heads the organizational unit.

x 794 The zar doctor often a matriarch, differs only in degree from
756 her flock; for she, too, must be possessed, must be forever afflicted by spirits. But she has managed to learn to control them, call upon her more powerful protective spirits to aid her against evil spirits,

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5



He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Alegue*, an Emperor.

[2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5



stout pole, from which hung huge pieces of red raw meat, covered with strips of red and gold cloth.

"These men stood closely together all along the tables and one on each side, so that the meat hung down from the poles over the tables just in front of the diners. The guests produced knives, and feeling the joint with their fingers to pick out a tender bit, rapidly sliced off strips of meat, which they put into their mouths, cutting off what would not go in quite close to their lips, an operation which, from personal experience, I know demands great skill if one's nose is not to suffer—as the cut is always made upwards!

"After ample libations of *tej* and *araki* (native mead, or hydromel and spirit) the diners filed out in perfect order, and the stage was cleared for the next party.

"The whole function had lasted nearly four hours and the Ras must have been heartily glad when it was over, for he had previously dined one instalment of 5000 warriors, and two more were to follow—between 17,000 and 18,000 in all partaking of the royal hospitality."

*Broundo* may be a nourishing form of diet tending to the development of warlike qualities, but its consumption has one serious drawback at all events, in that it is the cause of taenia (or tapeworm), a disease which is almost universal in the country. So much is this the case indeed that it is a recognized practice for all, high and low, to take monthly as a "taenicide" a dose of a plant known as *kousso*, which is so violent in its effects as to incapacitate the patient from work or occupation for the day.

Christians will not touch meat unless it is killed by

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



pleasure among the Amhara, but also as a typical response to situations which arouse anxiety. The crisis of death is met first of all by a prolonged ritual of wailing, and this is followed by a series of memorial feasts which occur on fixed days following the person's death. Any kind of bad news evokes repeated exclamations of "Ay! Ay!" When a child or wife is punished, the response is a prolonged and monotonous yell usually out of proportion to the actual pain felt. In the anxious hour before battle, war chants and boastful cries tune up the warriors' spirits. Moments of great awe, finally, such as the appearance of the holy ark when it is brought out of the church or the arrival of some great political personage, occasion a shrill ululation.

Response to illness was the anxiety area chosen as an index of positive fixation by Whiting and Child in their cross-cultural study of *Child Training and Personality*. They assumed that a fixation on oral gratification would express itself in a preference for therapies which involve swallowing something.[18] In this area, too, Amhara culture displays a preoccupation with orality, and not just in the form of swallowing. Something akin to a general principle for oral therapy appears in the well-known Amharic proverb: "For headache, shout on it! For stomach-ache, eat on it!"

A number of the oral therapies practiced by the Amhara are naturally functional, such as drinking a purgative made from leaves of the *kosso* tree to cure tapeworm, or eating a kind of unleavened corn bread to arrest dysentery. Beyond this, most of their magical therapies are also oral. Drinking holy water (and sometimes bathing in it) is believed to cure nearly every sort of affliction, from rheumatism and leprosy to eye and ear ailments. In some regions it is believed that eating the liver of a hyena will cure syphilis. Psychotherapy, too, often relies on oral remedies: the *zār* on a patient is often placated by feeding him, via the patient, a sumptuous meal. Oral types of prophylaxis are also to be noted. Garlic is eaten in order to prevent malaria. Certain kinds of animals are eaten on special occasions in order to ward off sickness. Finally, there is the remarkable phenomenon of the *lālibalā*, a night singer, who can protect himself against hereditary leprosy only by singing out loud in the night air.

In general, one can say that the Amhara have a tendency to attribute magical efficacy to oral incorporation and, to a lesser extent, to the adroit use of language. The latter belief appears in the assumption that human problems are solved by attaining some particularly fortunate verbal formulation, and in the association of outstanding wisdom with unusual mastery of language. The former appears in beliefs and legends which associate eating a lot with the attainment of unusual bravery, longevity, and physical strength. A legend about the invader Ahmad Grāñ, for example, relates that as a baby he was able to consume fourteen bowls of *ǐnjarā* at one sitting. A num-

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[For information on medical therapy, see category 116, pp. xix, 23-25, 33, 36, 41-43, 47-59, 62, 68-87, 113-115, 119-125, 135-136, 189-192, and 237-243.]

758 49
751 the sunlight.[6] After the disease symptoms have disap-
758 peared, and the convalescent has regained his former vi-
tality, some precautions may still be followed to pre-
vent the return of the original syndrome, to which he
[262] may have developed a vulnerability. For example, the
former sickman may be forbidden to eat one or more of
the foodstuffs which were included among the materia
[278] medica of his cure. Often, an amulet containing dried
materia medica of the primary medicine is also worn.

*278 Pharmacological Combinations. In the abstract, Amhara pharmacology can be considered as a corpus of discrete and varied instructions for a) conserving the latent healing power of botanicals, and b) converting this power into therapeutically effective agents. Seen from this perspective, Amhara pharmacolog y has the potential for a large number of logically possible combinations of instructions, ranging from those with few directions of any kind, to combinations with elaborate instructions in each pharmacological category. Although, empirically, Amhara herbal therapies probably fall short of the potential number of combinations, the combinations charac-

[757] [834] [6]Primary syphilis, in particular, sets elaborate requirements---the removal of all hair from the body, head, and face; in addition, there is a period of abstinence from coitus.